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Freedom of Expression in Egypt's Draft Constitution

Egypt is in the midst of a vitally important phase in its democratic transition, and a vibrant debate is ongoing over the nature of its constitutional protections for human rights. In order to provide support to this discussion, the Centre for Law and Democracy today released a set of *Comments on the Freedom of Expression and Information Clauses in the Draft Constitution* for Egypt.

"The fact that Egypt is having a democratic debate about the content of its new constitution is an extremely positive sign of the profound changes that have taken place," said CLD Executive Director Toby Mendel. *"At the same time, the specific proposals on freedom of expression and access to information, while an improvement over the 1971 Constitution, need to be amended to bring them more fully into line with international standards."*

Specific areas for improvement identified in the Comments include:

- Stronger positive guarantees for freedom of expression, which also protect the rights to seek and receive information and ideas.
- The need for the Constitution to set clear limits on the scope of permissible restrictions on freedom of expression, rather than leaving this important question open.
- The need to guarantee the independence of both bodies with regulatory powers over the media and the public media.
- Defamation should be fully decriminalised.
- There should be clear and unambiguous protection for the right to information.
- The right to engage in criticism of religion without inciting hatred against the believers of that religion should be protected.

The Comments are available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/freedom-expression-egypt-constitution/>.

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